

Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and further examination are requested.

Claims 1, 3, 5 and 13-18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Joon-Bo (US 2002/0055978) in view of Matoba (US 6,392,669).

Claims 1 and 14-16 have been amended so as to further distinguish the present invention, as recited therein, from the references relied upon in the rejection. As a result, the rejection is submitted to be inapplicable to the claims for the following reasons.

Claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba, since claim 1 recites a device including, in part, a schedule information managing section operable to manage schedule information indicative of master device candidates by a plurality of segments of at least time of day or season; and a switch controlling section operable to compare predetermined information regarding a state change of a specified slave device obtained by a device information processing section with predetermined information regarding a state change of the device included in own device information, and operable, when the state change of the specified slave device is smaller than the state change of the device, to switch operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform a master operation operated by the device and causing the device to perform a slave operation operated by the specified slave device.

The present invention, as recited in claim 1, utilizes a technique of shifting a master function to a slave device, which is determined to be in a more suitable state to act as the master device than the current master device, as the result of comparison of information regarding state change. Further, after the master function is shifted to the slave device, the previous master device operates as a slave device and remains as a member of the communication network. The combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba fails to disclose or suggest these features of claim 1.

Joon-Bo discloses a technique of shifting a master function to the most suitable slave device among a plurality of slave devices constituting a communication network when a master device leaves (disappears from) the communication network due to movement of the master device out of the communication area (see paragraphs [0020] and [0045] and Figures 3-6). In other words, Joon-Bo discloses a technique of establishing a new communication network when the master device disappears from the communication network.

Thus, in Joon-Bo, the master device disappears and does not remain as a member of the communication network. Accordingly, Joon-Bo does not disclose or suggest a switching control section operable to switch operations of the device and the specified slave device with each other by causing the specified slave device to perform a master operation operated by the device and causing the device to perform a slave operation operated by the specified slave device, as recited in claim 1. Therefore, it is apparent that the operation of Joon-Bo is different than that of the present invention.

It is also noted that, in the present invention as recited in claim 1, the shift of the master operation is determined by comparing the information regarding state change between the master device and the slave device. Thus, as an exemplary effect of the present invention, when the information regarding state change is, for example, information regarding continuation of a communication function (e.g., information regarding battery consumption), a communication network function can be prevented from being interrupted due to the disappearance of the master device.

Further, as another exemplary effect of the present invention, when the information regarding state change is, for example, information regarding communication quality, because a slave device, which can ensure a higher communication quality than the current master device, can operate as a master device, the communication quality of the communication network can be kept high.

Therefore, since Joon-Bo discloses a technique of establishing a new communication network when the master device disappears from the communication network, Joon-Bo cannot provide the exemplary effects of preventing the master device from disappearing and keeping the communication quality of the communication network high. As a result, Matoba must disclose or suggest the switching control section and the schedule information managing section, which is admitting in the rejection as lacking from Joon-Bo, in order for the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba to render claim 1 obvious.

Regarding Matoba, it discloses a system for managing schedules of a plurality of users (see column 3, lines 15-27). However, Matoba does not disclose or suggest a system including a master device and a slave device. Thus, Matoba does not disclose or suggest schedule information indicative of master device candidates. Accordingly, Matoba does not disclose or suggest the schedule information managing section of the present invention, as recited in claim 1,

operable to manage schedule information indicative of master device candidates. Further, Matoba does not disclose or suggest the switch controlling section, as also recited in claim 1. As a result, Matoba fails to address the deficiencies of Joon-Bo, and claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba.

As for claims 14-16, they are patentable over the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba for reasons similar to those set forth above in support of claim 1. That is, claims 14-16 recite similar limitations to those discussed above with regard to claim 1 that are lacking from the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba.

Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Joon-Bo in view of Matoba and further in view of Palm (US 2004/0218620). Regarding this rejection, it is noted that Palm is relied upon as disclosing a system that distributes mastering duties among a plurality of wireless terminals to uniformly drain the batteries of the terminals. However, it is clear that Palm also fails to disclose or suggest the above-discussed features recited in claim 1 that are lacking from the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba. Since claim 4 is dependent from claim 1, it is apparent that claim 4 is patentable over the combination of Joon-Bo and Matoba and Palm for at least the reasons set forth above in support of claim 1.

Because of the above-mentioned distinctions, it is believed clear that claims 1, 3-5 and 13-18 are patentable over the references relied upon in the rejections. Furthermore, it is submitted that the distinctions are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention would not have been motivated to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in, or otherwise render obvious, the present invention as recited in claims 1, 3-5 and 13-18. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 1, 3-5 and 13-18 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that there are issues remaining which must be resolved before allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

Kazuyuki KASHIWABARA et al.

By: /David M. Ovedovitz/
2008.10.14 13:53:02 -04'00'
David M. Ovedovitz
Registration No. 45,336
Attorney for Applicants

DMO/jmj
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
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